

**Summary of the
Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference
February 26, 1998**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, February 26, 1998, at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Anne Rhyne of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The principal purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of Draft 2 of the National Standards and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Handbook 150-XX.*

INTRODUCTION

Representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) were invited to participate in the teleconference. They were Mr. Robert (Bob) Graves from USEPA's Office of Research and Development, Ms. Wendy Blake-Coleman from USEPA's Office of Water, and Ms. Reenie Parris from NIST, Analytical Chemistry Division.

OLD BUSINESS

Review of the minutes of the January 12, 1998, teleconference was postponed until the next committee meeting.

STATUS OF DRAFT 2 OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

The committee first discussed the status of Draft 2 of USEPA's National Standards (Standards for Acceptance Limits and Sample Composition). Mr. Graves said that if USEPA Office of General Counsel approves the Draft 2 National Standards, USEPA will release it in the next week or two. Ms. Blake-Coleman said she hopes to be able to send out the entire package (25 to 30 pages). Ms. Rhyne said that she will distribute it to the Proficiency Testing Committee.

The committee questioned how the Water Supply/Water Pollution (WS/WP) program is being set up. It appears that USEPA's National Standards document is consistent with the Proficiency Testing (PT) Standards. Laboratories only have to pass one study per year; the second is backup for EPA. NELAC requires participation twice per year.

DISCUSSION OF NIST ISSUES

Ms. Anne Rhyne revisited the topic of a possible second or alternative Proficiency Testing Oversight Body (PTOB), in case NIST is unable to meet the requirements of the PT Standards. She asked for input from NIST about what they want to do. Ms. Reenie Parris stated that NIST has concerns about scoring criteria and non-USEPA laboratories and that further discussion is needed. With respect to meeting the NELAC schedule, she noted that NIST is facing limitations in staff, funding, and time. There are difficulties with the time frame. All of NIST's resources are

going into WS/WP right now. It was noted that the NELAC schedule for starting to provide proficiency tests must be in line with USEPA's schedule for cessation of providing WS/WP proficiency tests. Dr. Ken Jackson expressed concern about providing the remainder of the WP analytes. NIST is currently discussing the needs for solid waste.

PTOB SELECTION

The committee was reminded that at the Interim Meeting, the general sense was to adopt NIST as the PTOB for water and leave the PTOB currently unassigned for other categories. It was noted that there needs to be a formal procedure for recognizing the PTOB but that it is not appropriate to name the PTOB in the standard. There needs to be a separate resolution. The Proficiency Testing Committee will not appoint the PTOB, however, they considered making a recommendation. It was unresolved whether the Proficiency Testing Committee should make the recommendation to the Board or to the Conference. Dr. Jackson said that he would take the issue to the Board on the next day (February 27, 1998).

MEETINGS BETWEEN PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE, USEPA, AND NIST

The Proficiency Testing Committee plans to schedule a face-to-face meeting in Dallas, TX, sometime in March (one and a half days). The purpose of the meeting will be to go through sections and appendices of Chapter 2 to check for differences between the NELAC standards and NIST's Handbook 150-XX that may be problematic. In preparation, the committee was asked to review the NIST Handbook and note any discrepancies with the PT Standards. EPA's requirements for Water Quality Proficiency Testing Studies for National Standards are also to be reviewed.

A second, one-half day meeting will be held with USEPA and NIST in Washington, DC, in the middle of April. Issues must be resolved to finalize the PT Standards before presenting them at the NELAC Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. April 15, 1998, is the deadline for revised standards. The committee hopes to submit the standards for voting by April 20 (if late submission is permitted). Dr. Gutknecht will check on submission deadlines for the revised standards.

STATUS OF APPENDICES E, F, AND G

Mr. Matt Caruso said that Appendix E (Microbiology) has been revised according to comments received at the NELAC Third Interim Meeting. He is waiting to see if any more comments are received, but the appendix can be finalized now. Ms. Rhyne stated that because more work is needed on Appendices F (Radiochemistry) and G (Environmental Toxicology), the committee will present Appendix E for voting at the next annual meeting, but will hold off on Appendices F and G.

OTHER ISSUES

The Proficiency Testing Committee will be changing the teleconference days from Thursdays to Tuesdays. The next teleconference will be on March 10, 1998. Ms. Rhyne will confirm the teleconference with committee members by email.

ACTION ITEMS
Proficiency Testing Committee
February 26, 1998

| Item No. | Action | Date to be Completed |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. | The committee will review the NIST Handbook 150-XX and look for discrepancies with the PT Standards. | next teleconference |
| 2. | Dr. Gutknecht will check on submission deadlines for revised NELAC Standards. | |

PARTICIPANTS
Proficiency Testing Committee
February 26, 1998

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|---|---|--|
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